



Glasgow  
Climate  
Dialogues

Voices from the Global South  
September 2021

EVENT REPORT:

# Access, Participation & Voice

6 September 2021

This session was promoted to stakeholders with experience engaging in the UNFCCC and an interest in issues relating to access and participation, with a focus on participation from those based in the Global South. Over 70 people registered for this event and circa 50 attended on the day.

This event report was produced by Ben Wilson and Julius Ng'oma, co-facilitators for the session, and has been approved as an accurate account of the day by Augustine Njamshi, Stella Gama and Vositha Wijenayake.

Hosted by



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# Session Report

**Gerard Howe, Deputy Director, Scottish Government** opened the session, welcoming all participants and affirming the importance of these dialogues. Gerard noted that participation of people from the countries most impacted by climate change is vital to positive outcomes at COP26, and he invited participants to share ideas on how to maximise inclusion of these voices at the conference.

**Gaspard Nzabamwita** from Bugesera Province, Rwanda, a farmer working with Send a Cow, provided a pre-recorded video for the session. In this video, Gaspard explained how climate impacts affect his livelihood and community, underlining the importance of listening to voices from the frontlines of the climate crisis. Gaspard also took the opportunity to call on his government and global governments to provide more investment in technology and capacity building to build resilience to climate change.

[> Watch Gaspard's story – a farmer speaks on the climate crisis](#)

**Amelia Ma'afu, Caritas Tonga**, provided a video input, navigating the time constraints of inputting to European events from Oceania. Amelia highlighted how vulnerable people in her region are to the impacts of climate change, especially sea-level rise, and affirmed the importance of listening to people with this personal experience when developing climate change responses. She also highlighted the concept of Talanoa, which shaped the facilitative dialogue ahead of COP23, challenging all contributors to the Glasgow Climate Dialogues to enter into them with the spirit of Talanoa:

“Fofola ae talanoa ka e talanoa ‘a e kainga’ is a Tongan Conceptual Framework. It means ‘to roll out the mats so the family can dialogue’. It is an invitation to family members or a community to come together to talanoa, talk. The fala or mat signifies family, grounding, or safe space. The ‘fe’unu or strands that are weaved to make the mat represent respect, humility, forging good and respectful relationships and the passion for ensuring completion.

“The underlying meaning is an invitation to come together, be seated on the mat, to talanoa and arrive at an agreed solution. It is a safe space without hierarchical order where people should not feel fear or intimidation – even children have something to contribute. We agree on the future together.”

[> Watch Amelia's contribution](#)

**Stella Gama, LDC Group, and Advisor in Malawi's Ministry of Forestry and Natural Resources**, presented next. Stella focused her presentation on the gendered nature of climate impacts and solutions, and affirmed the importance of inputs from women & girls to UNFCCC processes.

“The COP should also ensure and deliver outcomes that will ensure that women and girls enjoy enhanced adaptive capacity, enhanced resilience, access to climate technologies, adequate finance for climate technologies and most importantly limit global temperature increases to 1.5C.”

Stella also took the opportunity to affirm the importance of all marginalised voices being included in the COP process: “All voices should be heard, listened to and acted upon. We need to build trust and transparency – and that COP26 must be an occasion for a step-change in climate action. This is the pivotal moment in the fight against climate change.”

**Vositha Wijenayake, Chief Executive of the SLYCAN Trust** followed Stella, and spoke from the perspective of civil society in the Global South. Vositha affirmed the important role that civil society plays in achieving COP outcomes, and the unique challenges facing CSOs from the south in accessing the negotiations. She challenged COP organisers to create a truly inclusive forum which leads to action on the ground:

“So lets look at a COP which will be inclusive and which allows all stakeholders to be involved without discrimination and which provides the ability to move towards outcomes that can be implemented and create urgent changes that we need to see told to enhance our climate action.”

Vositha then passed on to Chalani from the Global Youth Forum.

**Chalani Marasinghe, Global Youth Forum**, spoke from the perspective of young people concerned about climate change:

“Climate change is one of the most important issues affecting the youth, especially in developing countries with low incomes, large rural populations, reliance on natural resources and less robust safety nets. When it comes to decisions on climate action, youth are key stakeholders and have to live with the consequences of today’s actions or inactions. Collaboration with young people on these issues is absolutely crucial.”

Chalani emphasised the unique ways that young people are excluded from climate policy making, and encouraged the COP to ensure greater youth participation – such as by encouraging national governments to bring young people as part of their official delegations. Chalani also highlighted how COVID has a unique impact on youth participation at COP26 as many are not yet vaccinated, and called for a harnessing of technology to ensure these voices are heard.

**Augustine Njamshi, Chairperson, Technical and Political Affairs of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA)** concluded the speaker section of the event.

Augustine emphasised the importance of inclusion of the Global South in COP decision making, affirming that this is crucial to good outcomes:

“Participation or governance is not only about the adequacy of the final decision. It’s about how the decision was made. A decision taken at COP26 for us, without us, is necessarily against us. Anything for us, without us, is against us.”

Moreover, Augustine emphasised that this engagement must be meaningful and not tokenistic:

“Participation is not just being present at COP, it’s about how our concerns and suggestions are taken into consideration at the end of the day.”

Augustine concluded calling for climate justice and affirming that this cannot be achieved without inclusion of voices from the Global South:

“The world has to come together and make decisions that are concrete and that are progressive, in the interests of the people especially of the Global South. It is not our fault that we have to come for COP. We have to participate because we are suffering from a problem we did not cause.”

## Breakout Groups

Following the speaker inputs, participants were split up into breakout groups and invited to discuss the following questions:

- How to ensure COP26 is fair and accessible?
- How to ensure that the voices of those most impacted by climate change are heard & listened to?
- How do we ensure equitable, democratic and just participation of affected people in climate responses?

Participants were invited to discuss these orally on the call, and to add comments in relation to each question on online ‘boards’ for each group. Recordings of each breakout group were taken, as were records of the online boards and chat boxes.

## Plenary

In the plenary, each breakout group chair was invited to share feedback from their respective groups. Next steps on the production of the communiqué were explained, and closing remarks and thanks were given by Julius Ng’oma and Gerard Howe.

## Additional Input

Following the session, participants were invited to submit answers to three further questions:

1. What should be done by the UK Government and COP Presidency and the UNFCCC to maximise Global South participation at COP26, both as delegates to the negotiations and as civil society observers?
2. What can be done to ensure COP decisions and outcomes take into account the views and perspectives of the most vulnerable communities and their representatives in Global South in the event that COP is hybrid (i.e. partially in-person and partially virtual)?
3. Based on your expertise and experience, how can the COP26 Presidency ensure full participation for groups which have particular trouble accessing climate negotiations (e.g. Oceania Region, civil society, Global South, people with direct experience of climate change, women and girls, young people)?

## Interpreting Conclusions

An interpretivist approach was taken to synthesis and distill the data from the sessions into a series of key conclusions. This approach differs from positivist approaches of enquiry which traditionally attempt to convert oral contributions to comparative units when applied to datasets of this kind. Instead, the following process was followed to draw out the key messages and themes in an idiographic rather than nomothetic style. That is to say, trying to draw meaning and conclusions based on experience and understanding of the session. The verification of conclusions ensures validity of this approach.

The following steps were therefore taken in line with this approach:

- Read through all jamboards and Google form entries
- Drew out themes and conclusions
- Highlighted points that were repeated across sessions
- Watched full video of session including breakouts, noting new themes and flagging repeated themes
- Drew out key quotes, key messages and key demands into one document
- Sent to speakers to flag anything missing, incorrect, or needing tweaked
- Received verification from speakers
- Produced this report and submitted it to the Glasgow Climate Dialogues Taskforce for validation.

# Key messages for COP26 and beyond

## Key Messages

- Participation requires everyone to be around the table, especially the most affected. Decisions made without the most impacted people will work against their interests. They need to be meaningfully represented.
- This requires action from the COP presidency and the UNFCCC to make sure they are able to be around the table. This session heard from some of the groups whose participation is important but often difficult – people from Oceania, young people, women & girls, civil society (especially Global South civil society organisations) and Global South governments. There are others – indigenous people and people with disabilities – whose voices also must be heard.
- Climate change reflects global inequalities, such as in gender. Women and girls disproportionately suffer the impacts of climate change. They are also excluded from the process of addressing climate change in UNFCCC spaces. We must work to change this.
- Young people are uniquely affected because it is their future that will be most affected. Youth are particularly excluded from COPs.
- Technological solutions don't work for the participation of the Global South because of technological inequality.
- Expensive travel, visa and hotel costs are also excluding people from the Global South.
- UNFCCC must learn from COVID to address access and participation issues that have always existed.
- Participation is not simply about being there – people need to have genuine opportunity to engage during the conference.
- NGOs from the south have had a very positive impact on the UNFCCC in recent years – especially in highlighting the unique vulnerabilities and priorities of GS countries, and all speaking with collective voice. This has helped draw attention to the importance of means of implementation for National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions. This should continue.
- Youth are always excluded, but especially due to COVID, as many aren't vaccinated. Queue jumping on offer via the UK is seen as unethical.

## Key Demands

- Prioritise the Global South when making decisions about who gets to attend COP physically or virtually.
- Government delegations should support young people to be part of their delegations.
- Free public transport should be provided to all COP attendees around the city of Glasgow.

- The COP Presidency must make special provisions to engage with Global South civil society and elevate their contributions in the case of them being frozen out of COP26 due to COVID restrictions.
- Special efforts must be made to collect positions and recommendations of most vulnerable communities and for them to be shared with negotiators.
- Travel and accommodation costs in Glasgow should be subsidised for Global South participants.
- Efforts should be made to increase the number of women in official delegations.
- Vaccines should be delivered to COP attendees, now.
- Make more efforts to utilise technology to include people on the frontline of climate change in the negotiations.
- UNFCCC must increase financial support to improve access and participation.
- Increase quotas for CSOs from the Global South.
- Use press conferences / other forms of media to highlight the impact of real people from climate change.
- UK embassies around the world should set-up rooms and working stations for those who cannot travel to engage, and hotel costs should be paid for this.

## Appendix 1: Pre-Event Provocation

*The following was shared in advance with those people who registered for the event.*

Addressing the climate emergency is deeply political. Whilst science must inform our decisions, and help us to implement the best solutions, the biggest decisions around our response are shaped by politics. Reducing our emissions, adapting to locked-in temperature increases, supporting communities to recover from disasters or to rebuild having lost things that are irreplaceable – the questions around *how* we do these things and *if* we do these things are shaped by political decision makers.

For good decisions to be made, which are representative of the opinions and feelings of the people, it is vital that there is fair access and broad participation, especially from those who are most likely to be impacted upon by those decisions. In the case of climate change, therefore, it is vital that the injured parties of this injustice are given access to ensure their voice and needs are heard in the courtroom. This means people on the frontlines of the climate emergency, who have so often done little or nothing to cause this crisis. This also means their elected representatives, who must have proper access and representation, as it is their job to ensure prosperity and security in their countries, and yet their ability to do so is choked by other nations who profit from climatic neglect.

Not only is access vital, but meaningful participation must be the goal, to create a genuinely democratic process which doesn't simply *hear* but also *listens* and *responds to*. Participation does not mean that you invite a representative into a room to appear inclusive, ask them to speak, then proceed without engaging with, understanding or

responding to what they have said. That is extractivist – taking perceptions of people to use for your own ends. Real participation means mutual engagement in which all parties participate and are changed by the process. True democratic processes rely on genuine equality of participation and of voice. For this to happen in a global context requires an uprooting of existing systems of inequality which govern whose voice is heard and respected in what space, and a decolonisation of the systems of knowledge which perpetuate global injustice.

This session will focus on issues around access, participation and voice in tackling climate change. This includes reflections on whose voice is heard the loudest, and who is listened to; around who is invited in, and who faces barriers; what perspectives are valued, and which are shunned. All of these questions are vital to the success of the UNFCCC process, in terms of both how we agree on policy and in the implementation of climate solutions. This session will bring in key voices from global governments and civil society, alongside people on the frontlines of the climate crisis, to discuss what needs to happen to ensure fairness and justice are at the heart of our climate action.